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Virginia man pleads guilty to distributing and possessing child pornography

WASHINGTON - A 39-year-old resident of Newport News, Virginia, Harold Reynolds, pled guilty today before the Honorable James Robertson in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to one count of Distribution of Child Pornography and one count of Possession of Child Pornography, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Channing Phillips, Metropolitan Police Department Chief Cathy L. Lanier, and Joseph Persichini, Jr., Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office.

At sentencing, which is scheduled for September 15, 2009, Reynolds faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years in prison, and a maximum sentence of 20 years of imprisonment, and a fine of \$250,000. Under sentencing guidelines, he faces a likely range of 188 to 235 months in prison.

According to a proffer of evidence presented during today's court proceeding, on December 9, 2009, a member of the FBI/MPD Child Exploitation Task Force, who was operating undercover and posing as a pedophile, entered a chat room known as a favorite of adult men who have a sexual preference for children. The undercover's screen name referred to his supposed desire to have sex with children. The defendant sent a message to the undercover stating, "u have a daughter, I have a 16 yo daughter." The defendant then added, "love yung kids", and indicated that he had a sexual preference for children under the age of 12 years.

Over the course of the chat, the defendant sent multiple still images of female children under 10 years old having sexual contact with adult males. During the same conversation, the defendant identified himself as "Chris", and that he lived about an hour South of Richmond, near Williamsburg. The defendant told the undercover officer that when his now 8 year-old daughter "was younger", that he "got her on her belly, pulled down her panties..." and masturbated himself. A search of public records revealed that Harold Christopher Reynolds, the defendant, had been arrested in 2000 for the assault of a family member, but had been dismissed.

On February 9, 2009, the defendant was arrested at his home in Newport News, Virginia. During the course of an interview of the defendant, he admitted that in November, 2005, he put his penis into the mouth of his then 5 year-old daughter, and admitted that in 2006, he had the same daughter lay on her stomach, with her panties down, while he masturbated.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood and the Regional Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. In February 2006, the Attorney General created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorney's Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Taylor, MPD Chief Lanier, and FBI Assistant Director in Charge Persichini commended the outstanding investigative work of D.C. Metropolitan Police Detective Timothy Palchak, and the assigned FBI special agents. In addition, they commended Assistant U.S. Attorneys Julianne Himmelstein and William Woodruff, who prosecuted the case.

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